

G. H. Fanning,

TIP TOP WEEKLY

"An ideal publication for the American Youth"

Issued Weekly—By Subscription \$2.50 per year. Entered as Second Class Matter at the N. Y. Post Office by STREET & SMITH.

No. 120.

NEW YORK, JULY 30, 1898.

Price 5 Cents.



WITH ALL HIS STRENGTH FRANK STRUCK THE BEAR BETWEEN THE EYES.

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Frank Merriwell's Opportunity;

OR,

The Ghost of Black Gorge.

By the Author of "FRANK MERRIWELL."

CHAPTER I.

THE MASTER MECHANIC.

"Merriwell."

"Yes, sir."

"You're wanted."

"Where?"

"By the master mechanic."

"In his office?"

"Yes. Hustle now. It's important."

Frank was just leaving the roundhouse when this information was brought him by a man. He immediately turned about and made his way to the office of the master mechanic.

"Is your name Merriwell?" asked the attendant in the outer office.

"Yes, sir."

The attendant opened the door of the

inner office, on the ground glass window of which was the word "Private," and said:

"Mr. Merriwell has arrived."

"Show him in," growled an unpleasant voice.

The attendant flung open the door.

"Go right in, sir," he said.

Wondering what all this could mean, Frank walked into the private office, his cap in his hand.

A thin, dark, nervous man was walking up and down the narrow confines of the place, chewing at the stump of a black cigar. He stopped, with his hands in his pockets, and stared hard at Frank.

"Humph!" he grunted.

Somehow there was something insulting in that grunt, and it brought a flush to

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Frank's cheeks. However, Merry quietly said:

"You sent for me, sir?"

"If you're Frank Merriwell, I did."

"I am, sir."

"Why, you're only a boy!"

Again Frank felt the hot blood pulsing and burning in his cheeks.

"I am older than I look, sir."

"Perhaps so, but you're pretty young."

Mr. Newman, the master mechanic, sat down on his office chair and chewed savagely at the cigar stump, all the while staring at Merry in a most embarrassing manner.

"You're too young—too young!" he finally growled. "If you hadn't been recommended I wouldn't talk to you."

Recommended for what? These words set Frank to wondering and speculating still more.

"Did you stop 221 when it was running wild?" asked Mr. Newman, in a manner that indicated his doubts.

"I did, sir."

"Humph! What were you doing then?"

"Firing a switch engine, sir."

"How long had you been on the job?"

"It was my first day."

"What? You don't mean to say—Well, you had fired before?"

"Never."

The master mechanic shook his head.

"Look here, Merriwell," he said, with an insulting pucker to his lips, "don't tell me any fairy stories."

Merry's hands closed suddenly, but opened in a moment.

"I am telling you the truth, sir," he simply declared.

"But, confound it! it's impossible. A man who has fired only one day can't run an engine."

"All right, sir; I have nothing more to say."

But Frank's manner expressed a great deal, and Orrin Newman could see that he was angry, for all that he remained so cool.

"You were taken out of the roundhouse and put on a switch engine?"

"Yes, sir."

"Been working as wiper?"

"Yes, sir."

"How long?"

"Less than a month."

"Hey? And they put you on an engine? Look here, young man, we do not do business that way on this road."

"If you don't, you did."

"How did it happen?"

"A man was wanted, and the engineer went to Mr. Ganzell, the foreman. Mr. Ganzell told him about me, and he came and picked me out. That's all."

"What did Ganzell tell him about you, Merriwell?"

"I don't know, sir."

"What had you done?"

"Nothing in particular."

"Nothing in particular, but you had done something to attract Ganzell's notice. What was it?"

Frank could not disguise his confusion, and he found it difficult to express himself. He cleared his throat twice, and then suddenly said:

"I licked a man!"

"Oh-ho!" exclaimed the master mechanic. "Was that it?"

Merry nodded.

"And so a chap gets promoted on this road because he is a fighter and licks a man!" sneered Mr. Newman. "Fighters usually get discharged. That's what!"

"They couldn't discharge me."

"Eh? Couldn't? The deuce they couldn't! Why not?"

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"Because I was not working for the road when I fought."

"Wasn't working? How's that? Explain yourself, young man."

"It was before I got a job on the road. I came into the roundhouse looking for work. One of the wipers, the bully of the roundhouse, gyped me because I had on a good suit of clothes, and then he spat tobacco juice all over my shirt-bosom. I knocked him down."

Newman opened his eyes.

"That was right," he declared. "What happened then?"

"He jumped up and started in to thrash me. I had to fight, and I whipped him. The foreman saw the whole thing, and, when it was over, he gave me a job. That's all."

"Well, I'll be hanged if that wasn't an odd way of getting a job! Still I don't see how you got a chance to fire so soon."

"I don't know myself, unless it was learned somehow that I had studied."

"Studied?"

"Yes, sir."

"Studied what?"

"Locomotive engineering."

"Ho, ho! Now we are getting at it. So you studied? How?"

"At home. I bought books on it. It was something that always interested me, and I was pretty well posted by books when I got a job here."

"Well, you're an exception. Wouldn't find one out of five thousand like you. I suppose your studying helped you some, but it's a clean case of luck that you got ahead as you did. Ganzell must have favored you, too."

"He never showed me any favors about my work."

"Perhaps not, but it's singular. How did it happen you were alone the time you caught the wild engine?"

"The engineer had just stepped off for

a minute when there didn't seem to be anything to do. She was standing on the main track, and the operator came running out of the office shouting that a wild engine was coming. I ran down to get on the siding and let her pass, but found I didn't have time. Then I saw the only chance to save a smash was to run away ahead of her. I opened up and did so. She was beginning to play out, as her steam was getting low, and her cylinder cocks were open. On the first hard grade I let her shove her nose under the rear of my tender, and then I shackled the two together. After that it was easy work to go into the cab and shut her off, and I brought her back all right."

"You showed nerve and judgment," said Newman. "I don't believe in shoving green hands up over old men, for it makes trouble; but you had a chance to show what kind of stuff was in you, and you grasped the chance. That's what brought you up. You've been firing on 33 since that?"

"Yes, sir; I was put onto 33 the next day."

"Hard work?"

"Pretty hard, but I can stand it."

"That's a freight. How'd you like to go onto an express?"

Frank gave a start.

"I'd like it, sir, but——"

"But what?" sharply demanded the master mechanic.

"You do not believe in promoting green hands over old men, and I have not been on the freight very long, so——"

"Well, now don't run off with the notion that I hunted you up with the special idea of shoving you up over other men. I called for a good fireman and a nervy man, and you were recommended along with two others. The others have been tried. They lasted one trip each."

That was rather startling information,

SEE OUR NEW COUPON OFFER—LAST PAGE.

but Frank remained silent, although Newman seemed to stop in order to let him ask questions, if he desired.

Finding Frank was not going to be inquisitive, the master mechanic went on:

"I know you've made a trip to-day, but you are in early, and I must have a fireman to go out in forty minutes on the Evening Express over the Black River Branch. Will you go?"

"Yes, sir," was Frank's prompt answer. "All I want is fifteen minutes in which to get something to eat."

"Take thirty minutes. Another man will get her ready."

CHAPTER II.

ENGINE NO. 13.

Filled with wonder by what had happened, Frank left the office of the master mechanic and hurried away to a restaurant. He did not have time to go home, and so, on his way to the restaurant, he stopped and sent a message to Jack and Nellie, telling them not to expect him and not to worry, as he was delayed by his work.

It did not seem possible that ever before had a green hand advanced with such rapid strides on any railroad, and Merry knew that fortune had favored him in one way, at least—it had given him a chance to show what he could do.

His advancement was not a case of luck, however; by hard work and study he had fitted himself for it. He was different from the ordinary green hand who finds a position as wiper, and that difference told in his favor. He was clean, confident, punctual, polite and energetic. He was not afraid to work, and he took special pains to be polite and obliging. In fact, despite the fact that he was forced to work in such a manner, he

showed in every way that he had the breeding of a gentleman.

Some young men show themselves cads in their attempts to appear gentlemanly. They are desirous of making it apparent that they do not belong to the "common herd," and their efforts to let others know this are offensive. The true gentleman never seeks opportunities to display his breeding, but displays it scores of times a day without knowing that he does so.

It is not necessary that a man who works with his hands shall be anything but a gentleman. Cads do not believe this. They believe the real gentleman cannot soil his hands with manual labor. He will borrow, beat his friends, cheat his creditors, steal, do anything but work like a man, even though there may be those dependent on him who are starving.

A person may have such ideas and may live without lifting his hands to do a stroke of work; he may be a gentleman, but he really lacks true manhood.

Frank Merriwell had never been obliged to work till he found that job on the railroad. The duties of a wiper were such as any one might shun; but he had posted himself on railroad life, and he knew that nine out of ten who rise to positions of responsibility and trust in it begin at the very foot of the ladder and climb upward step by step.

Merry looked beyond the present. He had no idea of remaining a wiper when he entered the roundhouse; he expected to work his way onward till some day he would hold a position of responsibility and honor. To reach that position he must work and show himself worthy. There must be no hesitating or shirking, and there was none.

The man who hired Frank in the first place scarcely expected he would work a day. When Merry had worked a week

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the man began to realize that the youth was built of the "right stuff," even though he never seemed to give Merry the slightest attention.

Then Frank's opportunities came one after another. A machinist in the round-house took a fancy to him, and asked to have him as an assistant. Thus Frank was given a chance to become familiar by actual sight and touch with the parts of an engine about which he had read and studied, and the remarkable manner in which he advanced in knowledge astonished the machinist.

Frank's friends were anxious to see him get ahead, and it was through them that he was recommended for a place on a switch engine. He got the place, and his very first day was a fortunate one, as it was then that he captured the runaway engine.

Good men are always in demand on a good railroad, and a man who neither swears, smokes nor drinks stands a better show than the one who has those vices. Frank was strictly temperate, and that was something that counted in his favor.

And now he was to be given a position as fireman, on an express.

As he sat in the restaurant, hurriedly swallowing his food, he thought it all over, and he felt sure there was something behind it that he did not understand. He was certain that the master mechanic had not told him everything.

He remembered that Mr. Newman had said that two men had been tried before him, and had lasted just one trip each. Surely there was something mysterious about that. Why had they not lasted longer? Surely the engineer on the Black River Express could not be such a "pounder" that he knocked two men out in such a short time. Perhaps he had deliberately done them up.

Frank knew this was possible. He

knew that an engineer could "knock out" the best fireman who ever stood if he chose to do so. He could run the engine in such a manner that the fireman must find it impossible to keep up steam, even though he shoveled coal every minute. Then, when time was lost on the trip, the engineer would lay the blame onto the fireman, who could not say a word in his own defense.

Who was the engineer of the Black River Evening Express? Frank knew them all, and he soon remembered that it was a man by the name of Nort Pickett, an "old reliable."

This being the case, it seemed probable that Pickett had lost his regular fireman, and, not being satisfied with the others given him, had "knocked 'em."

"I won't stand that!" thought Merry, grimly. "If he tries it on me, there's bound to be trouble."

Then he remembered that the master mechanic had said something about calling for a good fireman and a nervy man, and that set him to thinking something else.

All at once he started, dropped his fork, and uttered an exclamation.

"Great Scott!"

He had heard about a terrible accident that happened on the Black River Line a short time before, and he just thought of it. A young girl had been run down in Black Gorge by the Evening Express and instantly killed.

Was it possible that had anything to do with the call for a new fireman on the Express?

Something told him that it did, and he scented a mystery.

Frank delighted in mysteries. He had solved many of them.

Anyway, he felt sure it would not be long before he would know why he had been given a place on the express.

FREE WAR BADGES. SEE LAST PAGE.

From the restaurant he hurried back to the roundhouse, and there he found a man at work on the express engine. Frank started a bit when he saw the number on the engine.

It was No. 13!

"Some persons might consider that an omen of bad luck," he thought, smiling; "but I am not superstitious to that extent. In fact, I am inclined to think thirteen means good luck for me, if anything at all. It has seemed that way in the past."

Then he climbed on board the engine, and told the man that he would take charge till the engineer arrived.

CHAPTER III.

THE MAN WITH THE SKELETON HANDS.

"So ye're goin' out on this engine, be ye?" said the man who had been getting her ready. "Well, I don't envy ye your job, young man. Ye won't enjoy it, ur my name's not Sim Stringer."

"I am not going out for my health," said Frank, with a quiet smile. "It's a case of business."

"That's what t'other fellers thought, but they wasn't stuck on that kind of business. They was the worst broke up men I ever seen in all my life."

"What other fellows?"

"Davis and Goodwin."

"They were the last two firemen on this engine?"

"Yep."

"Didn't hold the job long, either of them, eh?"

"Well, I guess they held it as long as you will."

"I'd like to know what's the matter. I don't understand this business at all. If you know what the trouble is, I shall consider it a favor if you will tell me."

Sim Stringer took his short-stemmed, black pipe out of his mouth and held it in his fingers.

"It won't take ye long to find out a big part of the trouble," he said. "Nort Pickett will be here soon."

"So it is the engineer? Is he a potunder?"

"No. He's one of the best men in the business."

"That makes it all the more remarkable. What ails him, anyway?"

Stringer seemed on the point of replying, but at that moment, a tall thin man came alongside the engine.

"Here he is now!" whispered Stringer.

The engineer boarded the engine on one side and the man with the black pipe dropped off on the other.

Pickett stopped and looked Frank over. He was not a pleasant appearing man, and he had a sharp, restless eye, which seemed filled with a hunted expression. The skin was drawn so tightly over his hard hands that the bones and joints showed painfully. The hands were like those of a dead person that had perished from lack of food or a wasting disease. There was something about those hands that caught Frank's attention and fascinated him with a feeling of horror.

The engineer saw Merry staring at his hands, and, with an angry exclamation, he put them quickly behind his back.

"Don't do it!" he snarled.

"I beg your pardon," said Merry, quietly. "Don't do what?"

"You know. It's all off now. I washed them."

"What are you talking about?" asked the young fireman, in wonder.

"Oh, keep still!" Pickett hissed.

"Keep still, I tell you!"

Then Frank began to wonder if the man was crazy. It did not seem possible that a crazy engineer would be permitted

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to run the engine of the Black River Express.

Pickett turned round and busied himself about something for a few seconds, while Frank made sure that everything was in place on his side of the cab.

While he was at work, Merry glanced at the engineer, and he was surprised to see Pickett standing still and staring at his own hands, turning them this way and that, as if looking for some mark upon them.

Frank had noticed that those hands were strangely white for an engineer. They looked as if they had been washed and bleached till not the least speck of dirt remained on them.

It was plain that, for some reason, Pickett was strangely sensitive about his hands.

After a little, Pickett squared about and looked Frank over again.

"Are you another?" he asked.

"Another what?"

"Another fireman."

"I am a fireman."

"And you have been sent to go out with me."

"Yes, sir."

"You're young."

Merry did not like that. He was beginning to grow weary of being told that he was young.

"Is that a crime?" he asked, rather sharply.

"No, but——"

"But what?"

"It takes a good man on this engine—a man with a nerve of iron. Boy, have you got a nerve of iron?"

The engineer suddenly leaned forward and caught Frank's wrist with one of those skeleton hands, which felt cold and clammy, like that of a dead person.

"I don't know about the nerve of iron," answered the fireman, quietly;

"but I rather think I can attend to my business under almost any circumstances. Please take your hand off my wrist."

With a snap, Pickett flung Merry's wrist aside.

"You'll need your nerve," he declared—"you'll need it."

"All right; but, if you don't mind, I'd like to know what I am going up against. Forewarned is forearmed, you know."

"Haven't they told ye?" whispered the engineer.

"Not a thing."

"Then why did they send you here? You should have been told. What have you ever done that they should choose you for your courage?"

"I didn't know I was chosen because of my courage."

"It will take a man of courage to fire on this engine. Did you notice her number?"

"Yes. It's 13."

"The unlucky number! Are you superstitious?"

"No."

"You'll become so. You can't help it. That number, thirteen, has followed me all through life. I was born on the thirteenth day of the month, and thirteen has been connected with every unlucky event of my life. I tried to get away from it, but at last I found that I could not, and I gave it up."

"What you really need, Mr. Pickett, is a good rest. You have overworked yourself, and you are breaking down."

"No, no; you are wrong. It's not overwork. You will know pretty soon—if you go out with me. But you better not go. I shall hoodoo you; I shall bring you the worst kind of luck. You are ruining your chances by going with me. I never told anybody else, but you are

young, and I hate to see you ruined, and so I tell you. Don't do it."

"Now I am sure you are unstrung and overwrought. What if I refused to go out with you? Surely that would ruin my chances, for it would be a long time before I would get another such opportunity. I have been given this chance, and I shall go."

"That settles it. You can go. We shall pull out on the line in five minutes. Oil up the drivers."

Frank took the oiler and swung down to obey the order, while Pickett made final arrangements in the cab.

Merry was filled with wonder by the thought that such a man as Nort Pickett had been left to run 12. Surely it was not known by the master mechanic or general manager that Pickett was so completely unstrung, or the man would be taken off.

Frank had learned that nearly all engineers are superstitious. They become so from their connection with their engines. In time the throbbing, panting machines seem like creatures of life to them, with all the whims and freaks of an animal of flesh and blood and intelligence. They learn to pet their engines, to coax them, to handle them as a skillful jockey handles his mount. They learn all the moods of the machines they run, and many an engineer will swear with all seriousness that his engine can think and feel.

An engineer should be a man with very few nerves. If he is excitable, he is not adapted to his profession, and the sooner he gets out of it the better it will be for himself and all those on his train.

Night runs are wearing. They tell on the nerves of the man who sits with one hand on the throttle, peering out past the throbbing, roaring, rushing monster in his charge, looking along the two

lines of gleaming rails stretching away in the track of the headlight till they are lost in the darkness that lays ahead. They know what may lay in wait for them—a loose rail, a washout, a weakened bridge, a thousand things that may cause a wreck and send a hundred human beings into eternity in one moment.

Frank believed that the time had come when Nort Pickett should be given a chance to rest and recuperate. But Merry had been sent to fire for the man, and he would do it. He remembered how a short time before he had been engaged in a terrible encounter with a crazy engineer in the cab of an engine, with the train running more than forty miles an hour, and he was not anxious for a repetition of the experience.

Nevertheless, he climbed aboard the engine, which pulled out of the round-house with Nort Pickett at the throttle.

CHAPTER IV.

THE ENCOUNTER ON THE PILOT.

Black River ran through a wild and mountainous section of the country. It was a turbulent stream, with many rapids and falls. Sometimes the railroad lay along its course, sometimes railroad and river parted company for long distances. Three times the railroad crossed the river.

In the springtime the stream was swollen and savage. It roared through the rapids and thundered over the falls; it gnawed at its banks and reached out greedily toward the railroad. There had been washouts along the line, and many serious accidents had been narrowly averted.

No one envied the engineer of the evening express. The position was not coveted by the men on the freight engines who thought they deserved better places.

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It was now well along in the fall, although no snow had fallen. The river did not menace the railroad, but seemed to be biding its time.

The express flew along the line, with Frank Merriwell firing and Nort Pickett running the engine. It was drawing toward night, and the mountains were purple at their feet, even as the rays of the declining sun touched their summits. Huge black rocks clung to the steeps, and jagged chasms lined them like irregular streaks of ink. The woods were brown and bare. The cool air cut with a keen edge.

For a time Pickett did not seem inclined to talk. Occasionally he watched the work of his fireman, and he seemed satisfied with it. At length he spoke.

"Get up there and sit down," he said. "There isn't a hole in the front end of the engine, and you've got too much coal in there now. What kind of men have you been firing for?"

"I've been on a freight, sir."

"Those chaps don't know how to run an engine, half of them. They'll kill a man. You've got up more steam than I need."

Frank was willing to rest, and he watched Pickett run her, growing more and more interested, for he began to understand why the engineer was considered a first-class man. It was plain that he could get the best work out of an engine on the smallest possible amount of fuel. He did not waste steam, and he pumped her scientifically. Here was Merry's chance to pick up points.

After a while—Merry fell to watching the man's hands—those skeleton hands. Why were they so white and thin and boney?

Pickett grew restless. He seemed to feel Frank's eyes directed toward his hands.

"Don't do it!" he exclaimed.

"Don't do what?" Frank asked.

"Don't look at them. I washed them clean."

"I don't doubt that. It's not——"

"A little more coal. Scatter it well—lay it on thin."

Frank felt that more coal was not really needed at that moment, but Pickett wished to turn attention from his hands. While he was tossing in a few light shovelfuls, the engineer flung open the forward window on one side.

"Go out and tighten up the nut on that bell," he said. "It work's loose sometimes."

So Merry took a wrench and went out along the running board. When he reached the bell, he found everything was all right, and he quickly decided that Pickett had sent him out there to take up his time and get rid of him for a few minutes.

As the young fireman turned back, Pickett shouted to him and motioned for him to go ahead. He caught something about the headlight, and so, wrench in hand, he went forward on the engine, although he was more than ever convinced that there was something radically wrong with the engineer.

Barely had he reached the forward end of the engine when the whistle shrieked. The train was flying round a curve, and Merriwell saw something on the track a short distance ahead.

That something looked like a huge dog at first, but it reared on its haunches directly in the middle of the railroad, and then, with a cry of surprise, Merry saw what it was.

It was a large black bear!

Again the whistle shrieked, but the bear made no move to get off the track. Either the beast was too surprised and frightened to move, or it had decided to

give battle to the monster that was rushing down on it with such wild screams of rage.

In another moment the pilot of the engine struck the bear, and to Frank's astonishment, picked the animal up as cleanly as possible, without seeming to harm it in the least.

And there on the pilot crouched the great bear, clinging fast, face to face with Merriwell!*

It was a most astonishing and unpleasant position, to say the very least.

"Well, this beats the band!" muttered Frank.

The bear growled, the sound being distinctly heard, for all of the roaring and throbbing of the flying engine.

Bear and youth looked straight at each other, neither seeming to blink.

"You had better step off," said Merry, half-lifting the wrench.

An angry look came into bruin's eyes, and he opened his mouth, growling again.

"Perhaps I am the one who had better step off!" muttered the youth.

Then the animal reared up and moved toward Frank.

Merry thought of retreating, but in a moment the bear was so close that there was very little chance for escape.

Frank believed that a sudden blow might settle everything, and so, lifting the wrench, with all his strength, he struck the bear between the eyes.

Bruin dropped down, but was not knocked off the engine. That blow was just enough to make the animal furious and again it reared, trying to clasp Frank with its paws.

Merry got out of the way, but there was no chance for him to run, and the bear pressed him.

*An actual occurrence, described exactly as it happened.--Author.

Again he struck.

The second blow was heavier and fairer than the first. It did the work, and the bear tumbled backward, rolling off the engine and down the embankment.

The encounter was all over in a moment, and Frank was unharmed. He thanked fortune that he had escaped so easily, and then turned and made his way back to the cab.

From his window the engineer had seen everything.

"Boy!" he cried, as Frank came in at the window, "you have plenty of nerve! Now I know why you were chosen to go with me as fireman. Almost any other person would have lost his head, but with two fair blows you knocked that bear off the engine. It was wonderful! it was marvelous!"

"Hardly that," said Frank, with a quiet smile. "It was the only thing for me to do."

"You didn't try to run away."

"I didn't have a chance."

"There was chance enough to try, and you might have escaped. I tell you, boy, it was wonderful! And the bear didn't seem hurt at all when he landed on the cowcatcher."

"That's right," admitted Merry. "I expected the shock would knock the life out of him in a jiffy, but somehow he wasn't hurt. I seemed to be a great deal more surprised than the bear."

"But he was the one surprised afterward. I am glad they put you onto this engine, for now I believe you may not be frightened into leaving at the end of the first trip."

"I do not intend to be frightened so easily."

Pickett could not say enough in praise of Frank's nerve and skill. He even started to shake the young fireman's

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hand, but seemed to suddenly remember his own hands and change his mind.

"I shall report this to the general manager," he declared. "It will be to your advantage, young man."

"Now don't do that!" exclaimed Frank, turning red. "It isn't necessary, is it?"

"I think it is. You don't suppose I can keep quiet when I have such a good story to tell? No, sir! It's nothing to blush over, young man; you should be proud of it."

"I think you are making too much of the affair, Mr. Pickett. I beg you not to do that."

"You are altogether too modest. It won't hurt you, so don't worry. We'll be at the next water plug in eight minutes, and we'll put the headlight on there. After we pull out, I shall have something to tell you."

CHAPTER V.

THE TRAGEDY OF BLACK GORGE.

It was growing dark as the express pulled out from its stop at the water plug. The headlight was burning. Ahead lay the wildest part of the mountains.

Again Nort Pickett was acting strangely. He was peering out from the window and muttering to himself.

Frank swung open the firebox door and gave her coal. His manly figure showed plainly in the red glare that came from the open door.

The whistle of the engine wailed dolefully as the train gained speed and went shooting through the twilight.

In the cab the little brass lamp was burning. But, for a moment, it almost seemed that there was no light at all when the iron door clanged shut.

The engine throbbed and panted as

Pickett worked her to gain speed. She seemed quivering with life from one end to the other. She danced and raked on the rails; she reeled round a curve with a jerk and a lurch; she awoke the echoes of the black steeps with another shrieking scream.

Down at the left lay Black River like a shimmering streak that was seen now and then. All at once the express roared over a bridge, with the river foaming far below.

"We're getting nearer!" said Pickett, hoarsely.

"Nearer to what?" asked Frank, for it seemed that the man had spoken to him.

"It's less than ten miles beyond Valley View."

"What are you talking about?" Merry sternly demanded. "You are mumbling to yourself like a crazy man."

"Am I? And they didn't tell you?"

"Didn't tell me what?"

"You should have known it. You should have heard about it. It happened two weeks ago—no, thirteen days ago! Ha! There it is again, there's the unlucky thirteen!"

"What was it that happened? Tell me about it."

"I will, for you should know. Didn't you hear that the express ran over somebody in Black Gorge?"

"I remember hearing something about it, but I had troubles of my own two weeks ago, and I did not pay any attention to it, if I heard it."

"That was what happened. It will be dark when we reach Black Gorge. It's always dark down there. Even in the daytime it is gloomy deep in the black depths."

The engineer was speaking loudly, for the roaring of the train made it necessary. His face looked thin and ghostly

DO YOU WANT A FLAG BUTTON OR PIN?

by the dim light of the lamp, and his eyes glittered. Frank was standing near him, so that he might understand the words which he could not hear across the cab.

"There was no moon," the engineer went on, "and I was shoving her through the gorge, for the roadbed is good and there are no crossings to bother. Burton, the fireman, was sitting over there. We had steam to spare.

"All at once Burton gave a scream, and just then, as we came round a curve, I saw a girl in the full glare of the headlight, walking on the track. I shut off, whistled for brakes, did everything to hold her up a bit. She fairly slid over the rails, and we were so close that the automatic brakes refused to work soon enough.

"Oh, my God!" groaned Pickett. "I saw her as she struck that young girl, who had been walking straight toward us, with her eyes closed, as if seeking death, but unwilling to witness her own doom. I seemed to feel the wheels go over her!"

The man stopped, overcome by his emotion. He lifted one of those skeleton hands tremblingly and passed it over his eyes, as if at that moment he saw the horror of it all and was trying to shut it out.

Frank fully realized what the emotions of the engineer must have been at that terrible moment, and his heart was filled with sympathy.

"You were not to blame," he said.

"No, no! Heaven knows I did everything in my power to save her! It was impossible. No human being could have done it. The train was stopped, and we found her on the track, horribly mutilated. I saw her with my own eyes, and the horror of that sight will be with me always. I walked back to the engine

and stood beside her. I was half-crazy then, and I cursed her. I struck her with my hands, and when I got into the cab there was blood on those hands! It was the blood of the poor girl I had killed!"

He looked at his hands and shuddered.

"Since then," he said, hoarsely, "I have washed them, washed them, washed them! Somehow it seems that I cannot wash that stain away. Somehow I feel as if her blood was still there!"

Now Frank understood why those thin hands were so white.

"I have a wife and children," Pickett continued, "and I must support them. I can't do anything but run an engine. If I could, I would get off the railroad forever. My wife is not well, and two of the children have been sick. It has taken every dollar of my money. I can't afford to be out of a job for a single day. I must stay here. There is nothing else for me."

"What you really need is a rest," Frank declared. "If you don't take it, you are liable to break down and lose weeks or months, instead of a few days."

"You might be right, but a poor man, situated as I am, must go on till he gives out entirely. There is nothing else for him to do."

"I should think you would ask to be transferred to some other line."

"I have."

"And they would not transfer you?"

"They told me it was impossible at present, but it might be done later."

"Perhaps if the general manager thoroughly understood——"

"It's no use. I can't make them understand how I feel about it. They say I was not to blame, and they think I am a fool to let it trouble me. They haven't any feeling."

"How did the girl happen to be on the track?"

"I found out all about that. She was a somnambulist, and she was walking in her sleep. She did not know the train was coming. She never knew what struck her. She was only eighteen, and was to be married in a week to a young man of Valley View."

"Well, that was hard," said Frank, "but no one can believe you are to blame."

"There is one who does, though."

"Who?"

"The young man who was to marry her. Her death has made him half-crazy. He found me. He wanted to tear me limb from limb, but they held him. He called me a murderer. He frothed at the mouth and cursed me."

Pickett was shaking all over now, and Frank saw how much the strain had told upon him.

"Don't think of it any more," urged Frank. "Don't talk about it."

"I must think of it. We are almost there. Valley View is just ahead."

"Do we stop at Valley View?"

"No; we go straight through. And Black Gorge is beyond."

Soon the lights of the town glimmered ahead. The whistle shrieked, and the express tore through the little mountain village.

When the town was passed, Pickett grew more and more excited.

"We are getting nearer—nearer!" he muttered. "We'll soon be there!"

Frank flung in more coal.

"Now comes the worst of it!" cried Pickett. "I want you to watch."

"For what?"

"For her!"

"Her? Whom do you mean?"

"The girl! the girl!"

"Why should I watch for her?"

"You will see her!"

"That is impossible! You are clean daft, man."

"No! I tell you that you will see her! I see her every night. The men who have been with me since that fatal night have seen her, too! That's what's the matter; that's why they lost their nerve and left."

"Why, what are you talking about? You don't mean——"

"I mean that I am a haunted man! I mean that her ghost appears every night at the place where I ran over her! Do you wonder that I am losing my nerve?"

"There are no such things as ghosts."

"I thought so once, but now I know better. There are ghosts, and I am haunted by one. You shall see it. Here we are! Watch! watch!"

The express dashed into the mouth of Black Gorge.

CHAPTER VI.

THE GHOST OF THE GORGE.

A-room, a-room, a-room—the express was dancing over the rails with a rhythmic roar.

The engineer, with his hand on the throttle, was peering from his window, his face ghostly gray, his eyes set and staring.

On the other side of the cab Frank watched from his window.

"The man is clean daffy," thought Merry. "He must be taken off at once and given a rest. That accident has turned his head."

Still he watched, now and then glancing at Pickett.

The engineer's lips were moving, but not a sound seemed to issue from them. In the shadow under the lamp one of his hands showed like that of a dead person.

The black walls of the gorge seemed flying past with the speed of the wind.

YOU SHOULD GET A WAR BADGE AT ONCE.

Great boulders, standing out in places, and shown for a second by the broad flare of the headlight, appeared to hurl themselves at the engine and vanish. Telegraph poles fled past in a thick, long row.

A-room, a-room, a-room. That was the peculiar song the rushing, rocking, throbbing engine seemed to hum. The engineer moved his hand, and a great spout of cinders shot from the smokestack for a few seconds.

Frank jumped down, flung open the door, and scattered fresh coal on the glowing mass within. From the firebox shone a red glare that struck against the cloud of smoke overhead, making it seem that there was fire above and below. Clang!—the door closed, and the fiery glare was gone.

Pickett was sending her now, as if his one hope was to pass a certain point at the highest possible speed.

"Watch!" he shouted. "Watch now!"

Back at his window Frank was watching.

The train reeled round a curve.

"There she is!"

Pickett shrieked the words.

Frank Merriwell gave a gasping cry of astonishment, for he caught a glimpse of something white on the track directly before the engine—something that seemed to be a female figure in the very centre of the track.

The engine whistle shrieked for brakes, and the engineer worked like a madman to shut off and stop her.

Over the white object the train dashed, and a feeling of horror struck at Frank's heart, for it seemed that they had run down a human being.

"I told you—I told you!" yelled the engineer. "I knew what would happen! It has happened so many times!"

"We ran over somebody!" panted

Frank. "I seemed to feel her when she struck. This is dreadful!"

"It was the ghost of the girl!"

"There are no such things as ghosts! We ran over somebody!"

"And we will not find a soul on the track, or a trace of anything. It was the ghost of the girl I killed!"

The brakes brought the train to a stop, and the conductor and train hands swung down with lanterns, as if they had been expecting to stop right there. Frank was off the engine in a moment, and he ran back along the train.

"What's the matter?" asked the conductor, angrily. "This business is getting played out! I can't stand it, and I won't!"

"We ran over somebody!" declared Frank. "It looked like a woman."

"Same old story! Have you got it, too?"

"Got what?"

"The spook-seeing fever."

"It was no spook, for I do not believe in ghosts, but I saw the engine strike her. We shall find her back here."

"You won't find a blamed thing, young man. Where's Pickett?"

"In the engine."

"Well, he'd better stay there to the end of the run, and then get off the railroad for good. His nerve is gone, and he is ruining every fireman he gets. He'll have them all imagining they see spooks."

"But I tell you I do not believe in such things! We struck some person fairly and squarely, and we will find the body. Come."

But, although they spent many precious minutes searching, no body was found, and there was no trace of a tragedy.

"I knew it," growled the conductor. "It's all blamed foolishness! This train

is getting the reputation of being haunted, and it is bound to hurt the road."

Frank was thoroughly mystified, and he felt like continuing the search, but time could not be spared, and the conductor ordered him back onto the engine.

The wondering passengers were staring from the windows and standing on the steps and platforms, asking a hundred questions, but receiving no satisfactory answers.

Frank hurried to the engine, and found Pickett sitting limp and curled on his seat.

"You didn't find anything?" asked the engineer.

"Not a thing."

"I knew you wouldn't, and yet I couldn't help whistling for brakes. I thought I wouldn't stop her again; I thought I'd keep right on, but I did it before I realized."

The conductor's lantern waved a signal to go ahead, but the engineer paid no heed. He seemed benumbed and incapable of action.

"Go on," said Frank. "The conductor has signaled."

Pickett did not speak or stir.

Merry caught hold of the man and shook him.

"Go ahead!" he cried.

Then the engineer slipped from his seat to the floor in a dead faint!

The conductor was savagely waving his lantern, and Frank knew another moment could not be spared by the express.

What was to be done?

"Wake up! wake up!" shouted Frank, shaking Pickett again.

There was no response.

Then Frank sprang to the throttle. He whistled "off brakes," and gave her steam. And the Evening Express resumed its way, with the engineer uncon-

scious on the floor of the cab and the fireman at the throttle!

CHAPTER VII.

UNWELCOME NOTORIETY.

Pickett groaned and opened his eyes after a few minutes.

"Get up!" cried Frank.

"What's happened?" asked the man, thickly.

"You fainted, and I took your place, so that none of the train hands might discover it."

The engineer sat up, pressing his skeleton hands to his head.

"Fainted?" he said, astonished. "Nothing ever happened to me like that before. And you—why, my place is there!"

"Of course it is, and the sooner you get into your place the better it will be. I don't know this road."

"That's right," said the man; "but I feel so weak—so weak!"

"You must get up. Come. Do as I tell you!"

Frank commanded, and Pickett obeyed. He swayed unsteadily on his feet, however.

"Now, get a big brace on," ordered Merriwell. "You must do it."

"I must—I know it! I will!"

The engineer seemed to shake himself together.

"Get away," he said. "I can run her now."

Frank gave him his place, and was relieved to see that the man appeared better than when they entered the gorge.

"It's past," said the engineer. "It is over for the night."

Then Merry resumed his work as fireman, but he watched the engineer sharply all the while. He gave her the coal

YOU SHOULD HAVE A "DEWEY" MEDAL.

she needed by this time, and saw Pickett look at his watch.

"Eleven minutes behind time," said the man. "We must make it up. Keep her hot, Merriwell."

"I'll do it," Frank assured. "You needn't worry about that. "Drive her, Mr. Pickett—drive her."

"It was strange that I should faint," said the engineer. "I do not understand it."

"Your nerves were completely unstrung, sir."

"And you did not let Ballister know it?"

"No."

"No one knows it but you?"

"No."

"Then, if you keep still, it will not be known. If it should be known, I'd lose my job in a minute."

"That's right."

"But you must protect me. I can't afford to lose my job. Just think of my sick wife and little ones! I must work for them—I must work!"

"By this time you must see that you need a rest—you must have a rest, sir. It is a positive necessity."

"Not as long as I can stand to my work."

"But you can't stand to it; you proved that to-night. It is killing you, sir, as sure as fate."

"Perhaps so—perhaps."

"There is no perhaps about it. I know it."

"It's not the work—not the work."

"If you could get a rest——"

"If I could forget! If I did not know that I am a haunted man!"

"You are not haunted."

"But you saw it!"

"I saw something. I don't know what it was."

"You saw the ghost of the girl that was killed by this engine."

"That is what you think, but I do not believe in ghosts."

"If you stay on this engine you will."

"No, I will not! If I stay on this engine, I'll find a way to lay the ghost, as sure as I am living!"

"If you could——"

"I can. I have dealt with such affairs before, and I've always found the ghosts were creatures of flesh and blood."

"But we run over this ghost every night just where we ran over the girl. We could not do that if it were a creature of flesh and blood. Oh, you will have to give up this time!"

"Wait. I do not give up very quick."

As they left the scene of the tragedy behind the engineer became more natural and calmer. He could talk in a coherent manner, but it was plain that nothing could convince him that he was not a haunted man.

Frank pitied him, and became more and more determined to solve the mystery of Black George, as that seemed the only way to lift the shadow from Nort Pickett's life.

Pickett told of the many misfortunes that had befallen him during his life, and always it seemed that his hard luck was somehow connected with the number thirteen. After hearing him tell of all those things, Merry did not wonder that the man was superstitious.

"Now," said the engineer, "on the thirteenth day after the girl was killed I have done something that will lose me my job if it is reported. This is more of my hard fortune."

"What are you talking about?" asked Merry.

"A man who faints on his engine is bound to lose his position, no matter

what his past record may be. It was lucky that you could run her."

"Yes, it was lucky, for now only you and I know what happened here."

"But you—you will tell?"

"Why should I?"

"It might be the means of your advancement. If it were known that you took my place——"

"I do not wish to advance by pulling anybody else down."

"And you will say nothing about it—you will keep still?"

"I shall say nothing about it, Mr. Pickett; but I wish you would take my advice and ask for a week off. You need the rest."

"And I must have the money I should earn in that week. No, I must stay by my job as long as I can. But I shall tell of your encounter with the bear, and that will mean something to you. I shall do my best for you, young man."

Then, all at once, the engineer turned and stared at Frank, crying:

"Is it possible that you are ready to stay on this engine after to-night?"

"You may be sure I shall stay, sir."

"But the others—they lost their nerve."

"It strikes me they didn't have much nerve to lose. They were frightened off by a shadow."

"You have the true grit, that is plain. Some day you will get to the top, Frank Merriwell, for nothing will daunt you. I wish you the best of luck."

Frank could not help wondering at the change in the man, who was growing steadier and calmer as the train sped on and left the long miles behind.

Pickett showed his skill as an engineer, easily making up the lost time, and Frank found the task of firing for him far easier than he had anticipated.

The engineer was desirous of teaching

Merry as much as possible, and he explained many things that it was necessary for a first-class engineer to know.

He even gave over the throttle to Merry, standing by and watching and talking to him and shoveling coal when it was needed. He told Frank all about old 13's little peculiarities and eccentricities. He explained why engines differed so much, and told how each one must be handled differently.

That trip was a great thing for Frank, a fact that he fully realized. He was learning, and learning fast.

True to his word, Pickett reported the encounter with the bear on the pilot of the engine, and, the following day, Frank was found by several reporters, who were anxious to hear his story of the affair. Of course he told it, and the afternoon papers had an account of it, giving a large amount of space to the story.

When Frank came round to get old 13 ready for the night run, he realized that every one was staring at him, but, at first, he could not understand why.

Larry Logan, one of the engine wipers, was the first to say anything. The young Irishman had a queer twist on his mug as he stopped near Frank and jerked at his cap, observing:

"It's yersilf Oi hope Oi see well this avening, Mishter Merriwell?"

"I am quite well, I thank you, Larry," Frank answered.

"Oi undherstand it's a roight foine toime ye've been afther havin', me b'y."

"In what way?"

"In siveral ways, begobs! Which had yez rayther meet now, Ould Pickett or th' bear?"

"Why, I had no trouble with Mr. Pickett."

"It's luck ye're in, thin. But how about th' bear?"

"The trouble with him did not last long."

"Begorra! it wur a roight foine job ye did. Whoy, it's yer name they have in th' papers in big type. Ye're famous now, Mishter Merriwell, so ye are."

"Well, I don't know as I am pleased over that," declared Frank. "I wish Pickett had kept still about it."

"Ah, now, thot's where ye're wrong, me b'y. It'll be a good thing fer yez. Th' more advertising a marn can have nowadays, av it's the roight kind, th' bettther it is fer him."

"Still I don't like it," persisted Frank. "And I don't see how it will do me any good."

"It's notice ye do be afther gettin'. A marn may worruk all his loife an' niver amount to anything at all, at all, av he don't attract notice."

"Well, you may be right," smiled Frank; "but knocking a bear off an engine is not what I'd like to do to attract notice."

"Ye'll have yer chance some other way, me b'y. Ye're goin' out wid th' ixpress agin?"

"Of course."

"They said ye wouldn't go but wance."

"Because others didn't."

"Yis."

"Well, I shall go on old 13 as long as they keep me here."

"Wid Pickett?"

"I do not think I shall have much trouble in getting along with Mr. Pickett."

"How about th' shpook?"

"Then you know about that?"

"Yis. Iverybody knows about it."

"But I didn't when I started out with the express."

"Oi reckon they didn't want yer ter know."

"I should have gone just the same if I had been told all about it in advance."

"Oi don't doubt thot, me b'y; but there are others thot wouldn't. They didn't know but ye wur wan av thim others."

At this moment a man approached, and said:

"Mr. Merriwell, the master mechanic

wishes to see you in his office right away."

CHAPTER VIII.

SURPRISING THE MASTER MECHANIC.

"But I must get this engine ready to go out," said Merry. "I can't leave her."

"I have been sent to get her ready," assured the man. "You needn't let that worry you. Go see the master mechanic."

So Frank swung down from the engine and started for the office, wondering what could be wanted of him.

He was admitted immediately to the presence of Mr. Newman, who was standing with his back to the door, looking out of a window. The man turned about sharply, chewing at the end of a black, half-smoked cigar. Frank stood there hat in hand, bowing respectfully, but not with a humble air.

"Haw!", coughed the master mechanic, in what seemed to be a manner of contempt. "What do you want?"

"I believe you sent for me, sir."

"Did I? Well, didn't you want to see me?"

"I don't know that I did, sir."

"Haven't you any complaint to make?"

"About what?"

"Your work, Pickett, spooks—some thundering foolish thing!"

"No, sir."

"Eh? I declare!"

Mr. Newman was astonished, and he chewed away at the cigar after the manner of a horse champing at its bit.

"That's strange," he said—"very strange. Haven't you some kind of a freak yarn to tell me?"

"No, sir; I have no yarn at all to tell you."

"Did you get along with Pickett all right?"

"Yes, sir."

"Didn't have any trouble with him?"

"No, sir."

"Amazing! Amazing! Don't you want to be taken on that job and placed somewhere else?"

"No, sir. I wish to stay on this job."

The master mechanic sat down on his chair and stared at Frank.

"I'm glad to hear it!" he suddenly ex-

BE PATRIOTIC—WEAR A BUTTON.

ploded—"glad to hear it! But perhaps you haven't had time enough to get scared. Perhaps another run will fix you. Firemen and engineers are all fools! They are superstitious, and a superstitious man is a fool! You're young. You'll get it pretty soon. They all get it."

Frank remained silent, with the faintest trace of a smile on his face. The master mechanic did not like the look, for he sprang up, exclaiming:

"Stop that! You look as if you want to tell me that you know better. You have no right to tell me anything of the sort! I know railroad men, and I know my business! Don't tell me you will not become superstitious! I know you will! Keep still, sir!"

"I have not said a word, Mr. Newman."

"I know you haven't—with your mouth; but you can talk with your face. Never saw a face before that could say things the way your face can. And you're nothing but a boy! Why don't you make a complaint of some kind?"

"You seem to be disappointed, sir, because I do not."

"I am. I told the man who recommended you that you would leave the train before the end of the trip; and here you are not even making a complaint!"

"I have no reason to complain."

"Why don't you kick because you weren't told that the Evening Express is haunted—and all that rot?"

"Because I do not believe the Evening Express is haunted."

"What? Why, didn't you see it? Didn't you tell Ballister, the conductor, that you saw the train run over what looked like a woman in Black Gorge?"

"Yes, sir."

"Well, what about that—what about it, young man?"

"That's all there is about it. We were unable to find the body, and we went on."

"But you don't think you actually ran over a living person?"

"Not now."

"Ha! That's it! Then what did you run over?"

"I don't know."

"How do you explain it?"

"I don't explain it."

Newman struck his hands together and rolled the cigar from one corner of his mouth to the other.

"You'll come to it, like all the rest," he declared. "What you can't explain will worry you, and you'll grow superstitious. You will be afraid of spooks within a year—or less time. But I'm glad you are not now. I'm glad to find somebody who is willing to fire on No. 13. I believe that number scared them as much as anything. Don't see why they wanted to make an engine with that number. Why didn't they skip it? We'll have to make a change; we'll have to take it off that line. But it's one of the best engines running. The traveling engineer says so. What's all this stuff I hear about a bear getting on the pilot and being knocked off by you?"

"It really happened, sir."

"Tell me about it."

Frank did as directed, making the story as brief as possible; and claiming that he was forced to strike the bear with the wrench, as there was no chance for him to retreat. He was perfectly modest in all his statements.

"Remarkable!" exclaimed Mr. Newman. "Very strange affair. And still you do not think old 13 is unlucky."

"It was to the bear," smiled Frank.

"Well, I guess you have got some nerve," nodded the master mechanic, showing more satisfaction than he had previously. "I'll give it up. You may stick a while. I think we'll keep you on the express. But I don't know about Pickett. He's been a good man, but—Tell me just how he acted."

This was putting Frank in an awkward position, for he did not wish to tell anything that would injure the engineer, and he knew the whole truth must harm him.

"I told you, sir, that I got along all right with Mr. Pickett."

"Yes, I know that; but how did he appear? Was he nervous, excited, peculiar?"

"Well, sir, you must know there has been a severe strain on his nerves. The unfortunate accident in Black Gorge was quite enough to shake the strongest."

"True. I told him to lay off—to take a

rest. He wouldn't. He knows every inch of the Black River Branch, and he could whistle for crossings without a headlight in the blackest night that ever lay outdoor. He is one of the best engineers to make time that there is on the road, and he doesn't drink. Those things are in Pickett's favor, but there are things against him, especially since the accident. I want to know what to do with him."

"I trust you will not consider me presuming, Mr. Newman, but I would suggest giving him a change onto some other road."

"And putting a new man onto the express—that's what I don't like to do. Of course there are plenty of men to take her—good men, too. Do you think you can get along with Pickett?"

"Yes, sir."

"Now, look here, I want you to report to me every day just how he is doing. You're in the cab with him, and you can watch him. If you think he is getting too bad to run her, let me know it. Will you do that?"

Frank hesitated a moment, and then said:

"I suppose it would be right, as he might send a hundred souls to death any night; but it seems like playing the spy on him, and I do not relish the job."

"Oh, bosh! Don't get your head full of such ideas! It's all right. You might have a relative or a very dear friend on the very train that he wrecked. If the man is not fit to handle an engine, it is your duty to report it."

"All right," said Frank; "even though I may not relish the task, I'll do my duty. You may be sure of that."

"I am, young man!" exclaimed Newman, seeming to cast off his disagreeable manner for a moment. "I believe you are all right, and I think it was a lucky strike when I sent you out with 13. You have advanced pretty fast since getting a job on this road, and now you have a great opportunity, for a good fireman on the express should be able to work into a berth as engineer in time. If you could serve the ghost as you served the bear, it would be a good thing for you and the road. It's getting near time for you to go out. Good-evening."

"Good-evening, sir."

Frank left the office and hurried back to old 13.

CHAPTER IX.

SURPRISING INFORMATION.

Pickett was on the engine when Frank returned. The engineer looked relieved at Merry's appearance.

"So the master mechanic wanted to see you?" he said, eagerly. "What did he want?"

"Wanted to know if I had any complaint to make."

"Did you?"

"No."

Pickett looked still more relieved.

"I suppose the others must have complained. Oh, I knew it—I knew it! Did he ask about me?"

"Yes, sir."

"What did he want to know?"

Frank told him all about the interview with the master mechanic, and Pickett cried:

"Good for you! If you had complained, like the others, I might have lost my job, for he would be sick of putting a new fireman on here every trip. I knew it couldn't last long if they kept backing out, but you were so young I was afraid you would be worse than the others. You were the only one of them all who had real courage."

Pickett, himself, seemed far better than he had the previous day. The fact that Frank had stood by him in such a manner appeared to brace him up wonderfully.

After coupling on and pulling out with the train the engineer fell to telling Frank about his private affairs, and it was not long before Merry had a complete outline of his life and history. The engineer seemed to talk that he might keep from thinking, and Frank encouraged him in this.

After a while, Pickett fell to asking Merry questions about himself.

"You are not like the general run of firemen," he declared. "It is plain you are a grade above them. Your manner is different. Mr. Merriwell, you are a born gentleman."

CLIP FARADAY IS A FOE TO THE SPANIARDS.

"Thank you," said Frank, quietly. "I always try to be a gentleman under any and all circumstances."

"Don't you find it pretty hard in your present work?"

"No. I believe a laborer may be a gentleman, if he will."

"You will find it difficult to make some so-called gentlemen believe that."

"There are thousands of so-called gentlemen who are not gentlemen at all. The man who boasts that he is a gentleman is always a cad."

"That's right, my boy! But the lad who is brought up to work does not have the opportunity to acquire the polish that distinguishes the gentleman."

"He may acquire it if he desires. Besides there is a difference between the artificial gentleman and the natural gentleman. One is all polish, which is simply a thin veneering, while the other is a gentleman by instinct and by a desire to be truly so. Many a natural gentleman has been raised on a farm, without an opportunity to see anything of the world till he was a man; yet, when he came to mingle with people, it was the easiest thing in the world for him to be gentlemanly in everything. In nine cases out of ten, the mother was responsible for this. A boy's mother is always his truest and best friend."

"Right again, young man! And I know by the way you speak that you must have had a good mother."

"Yes," said Frank, earnestly, "the dearest and best mother that ever lived! God bless her!"

"She—she—you lost her?"

"No, I did not lose her. She is an angel in Heaven, but she is not lost to me, for every day, every hour, always I feel her influence about me. Her influence has guided me all my life, and always will. Whenever I have been tempted to do wrong, and that has been many times, her sweet face has risen before me and she has held me in check. She loved me so, and I was so proud of her! When I have been tempted something has seemed to say, 'Your mother is watching you,' and that has saved me."

The look on Frank Merriwell's face gave the engineer a feeling of awe.

"My boy," he said, "you will always be all right as long as you remember your mother in that way. If the memory of his mother was as dear to every boy the world would be far better than it is. How long has your mother been dead?"

"Nearly seven years."

"And your father—is he dead?"

"I do not know."

Pickett was surprised, and Frank went on quickly:

"My father was a restless man. Fortune did not smile on him, and he always dreamed of making a great sum of money somehow. He wandered here and there over the face of the earth, seeking to make a strike elsewhere. Several times he seemed to have hit it, but always luck turned against him. The last I knew of him he was in New Mexico. He owned a mine. Since then he has completely disappeared."

"And you have no brothers or sisters?"

"No."

"Then you are alone in the world?"

"Not quite. I have two little friends, a brother and sister, whom I first found on the streets. The boy is lame and the girl is blind. Some day her sight will be restored to her, I hope. We are saving money in order that she may go to a famous oculist in New York. She is a dear, sweet little girl, and I love her as much as if she were my own sister."

"Some day, perhaps, if things come right, she may be more than a sister to you."

Frank turned crimson.

"No, no!" he quickly cried. "I do not care for her that—that way. She is just a little girl, and she knows that there is—another."

"Ah!" exclaimed Pickett. "Another? That is good! I believe a young man is better and has more ambition if he feels there is a nice girl somewhere in the world whom he loves and who loves him. But what did you do before you worked on the railroad?"

"I was going to college."

"College?"

"Yes, sir; to Yale."

"I knew you were not like the com-

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men run of men on the railroad. Now I am beginning to understand. Did you graduate?"

"No."

"Too bad! Why not?"

"I was forced to leave because of the loss of my fortune. I had to do something to make a living."

"Then you had a fortune?"

"Yes, sir; a small fortune left me by my uncle—my father's brother."

"How did you lose it?"

"My guardian lost it speculating."

"Why, the scoundrel! I presume you prosecuted him, as he deserved? You sent him to prison?"

"No."

"No? Why not?"

"He was trapped by a scoundrel, who deliberately ruined him. It was his lack of judgment that led him into the snare, and he was doing it for me. He believed he was making the investments to the best advantage."

"Yes, but he had no right to do anything of the kind. It was a crime."

"That is true."

"And he should have been punished."

"He was punished."

"How?"

"The knowledge of what he had done crazed him."

"And he was taken to an insane asylum?"

"No. I took care of him myself."

"You—you did that—after he had ruined you?"

"Yes; I saw that he had the best of care, but it was of no use. The doctor could not save him."

"Then he died?"

"Yes, he died brokenhearted. The only man I have ever felt like punishing was the wretch who led him into the snare, Darius Conrad."

"Conrad—Darius Conrad? Was that his name?"

"Yes, sir. Why?"

"Why, a man by the name of Darius Conrad is one of the biggest stockholders in this railroad."

CHAPTER X.

TRUE HATRED.

Frank was astonished.

"It can't be the same man!" he cried.

"I don't know about that," said the engineer.

"Describe him," panted Merry.

Pickett did so, and Frank grew excited as he listened.

"That is the exact description of Darius Conrad, of Bloomfield, my home!" he declared. "Can it be the same man?"

"Bloomfield, Bloomfield," muttered the engineer. "Why, it seems to me that I have heard that he has a country residence in a place called Bloomfield."

"Then it is the same man! It is not strange, for he has made a raft of money, and he invests in whatever he believes secure and paying. And he is one of the heaviest stockholders in this railroad?"

"They say he controls the road, having enough stock to sway things as he likes. There is not an official on the whole road but bows and cringes before him."

"And it is like Darius Conrad to keep men bowing and cringing! Oh, he is a villain! And I am at work on his railroad! That is too much! I can't work here!"

"What's that? what's that?"

"I can't work for that man!"

"Why not?"

"He is a scoundrel, and he robbed me and caused the death of poor Professor Scotch, my guardian."

"I don't doubt but he is a scoundrel, but you can't afford to ruin your own prospects if he is."

"What do you mean?"

"Give her some coal, and I will tell you."

Frank did as directed, flinging in a thin layer of coal over the top of the glowing mass. Then he again eagerly asked Pickett what he had meant by his words.

"Just this," answered the engineer. "If you leave this road you take a long step backward."

"I can get a job on some other road."

"Yes, as wiper. You have not fired

here long enough so that you can get a letter of recommendation, for all the high mucks will be hot to think you should leave after you have been shoved ahead so far."

"That might be true."

"Of course it is true. Not one man in ten thousand gets ahead in railroading as fast as you have since beginning work. And now you have the opportunity of your life."

"Do you think so?"

"Of course I do! You have shown your nerve and courage, and everybody knows about it. It has brought you to notice. All the other surprising things you have done since beginning work for this road are being talked over."

"Well?"

"Well, that means that you will be given still greater opportunities to advance. It is known that you have the nerve to make a first-class engineer. All you need is the knowledge—practical knowledge. You can get it right here on this engine with me. I will give you every chance—I will be your instructor. You can run an engine now, but you must have a thorough knowledge of the art before you will be trusted with anything better than a yard or freight engine. If you stay with me, you get it."

"And if I stay with you I shall be working for the one man in the world whom I hate above all others."

"Then you can hate?"

"Yes; but I do not think I ever really and truly hated anybody but that man. I did not know what it was to hate. It is a terrible feeling."

Pickett nodded.

"Yes," he said. "I read once that a person incapable of great hatred was also incapable of great love, and I believe it."

"Well, I know how much I have hated that man. The mere thought of him fills my heart with a feeling that frightens me when I think of it afterward. It seems that I could kill him by inches, and laugh at his sufferings!"

"That is hatred all right in your case, for men only feel like that from intense hatred or intense love, and it is certain that you cannot love him."

"I have not permitted myself to think

much about the man, but I have dreamed of torturing him and exulting as he writhed in anguish."

"You must control this terrible hatred, my boy; you must not let it get the best of you, for it might ruin you."

"I know it."

"You can control your passions?"

"I have thus far during my life. Darius Conrad has a son, and that son is as much a villain as his father. He always despised me, and he took every opportunity to sneer at me after I became poor through the machinations of his father. Of course I resented that."

"Well, I should think likely."

"We had several encounters. Once he tried to run over me with a horse, but I tore him from the saddle and gave him what he deserved."

"Good for you!"

"Another time when he forced his way into my home with his father, I threw them both out of the door."

Pickett brought one of his thin hands down on his leg with a slap of satisfaction.

"That was right," he cried.

"Dyke Conrad plotted to have revenge," Merry went on. "In Bloomfield there was a gang of young ruffians who had organized themselves into a body of whitecaps. Dyke was one of them. He hired the gang to kidnap me one night."

"And they did it?"

"Yes. I was captured and taken to an old house in the woods, where Dyke was waiting for me."

"Ha! What happened then?"

"I knew him even though he was disguised, like the others. I called him by name, and swore I would bring him to account for that dirty piece of work."

"And you frightened him?"

"No. I made him furious. Of course he denied that he was Dyke Conrad. But he was going to torture me. He had a roaring fire built in an old open fireplace, and then ordered that my shoes and stockings be removed."

"Go on!" eagerly breathed Pickett.

"They managed to do as he directed, although I made a struggle. But there was one big fellow who took no hand in the work. He stood aside and looked on.

When my feet were bare, Dyke took a burning brand from the fire and started to put it against my soles."

"The savage!" cried the engineer. "He should have been shot!"

"He would have carried out his dastardly scheme but for the big fellow who was standing looking on. Right here that chap interfered. He said he had helped capture me, but he was not going to see me roasted like that."

"Good for him!"

"Then there was a terrible row. The big fellow got me onto my feet and set me free by cutting the ropes that held me. While he was doing this, Conrad attacked him. He rushed onto the knife, and then fell to the floor, seriously wounded."

Pickett actually laughed.

"That was retribution!" he cried.

"The fellow thought he was going to die, and he was dreadfully scared. Then I bound up his wound so that the flow of blood was checked somewhat, and told the others to get him to a doctor as soon as possible."

"You—you did that—for him?"

"Yes."

"Why didn't you let him bleed to death?"

"Enemy though he was, and a dirty one, I could not see him die in such a manner."

The engineer seemed wonderstruck.

"Well, you are different from most people," he declared. "He brought it on himself, and he was served right when he got the cut. Not one person out of a thousand in your place would have lifted a hand to save him. Still I can see that it was a noble and forgiving act."

"No, it was not a forgiving act, I did not forgive him, but I felt that it was my duty to save his life, if I could, and I did my duty. A few days later I saved it again."

"How was that?"

"Darius Conrad's house burned. I was among the first to reach it. When I got there, every one but Dyke was out. He, wounded and unable to escape, was penned in his room. It looked as if he must be burned to death."

"Retribution again!" shouted Pickett,

rather wildly. "Fate was giving him what he deserved."

"Darius Conrad was crazed. He shrieked for somebody to save his boy. I went into the house and brought Dyke Conrad out through the fire and smoke, dropping him at his father's feet."

"Gods!" cried the engineer, staring at Frank. "And still you did not forgive?"

"No! When they tried to thank me, I told them to spare themselves. I told them I had saved the boy because I hated him, and wanted him to live that I might some day get even with him and his father. I scorned them!"

Frank's eyes were blazing and he shook with the thrill of remembrance. His nostrils dilated and quivered, while his hands were clinched. He was drawn up to his full height, and a fine picture he made at that moment, standing there in the swaying cab of the express.

"That was hatred!" cried Pickett. "Now I understand it. Young man, you can hate as intensely as you can love. Some day you will even accounts with Darius Conrad and his son. I am sure of it."

"I have thought so all along," said Frank; "but I have not permitted my mind to dwell much upon it, for I found such thoughts were making me hard-hearted and bitter."

"Stay here on this railroad. You will be near the man you hate, and your opportunity to even the score may be given you when you least expect it."

"Perhaps you are right," admitted Merry.

CHAPTER XI.

FRANK ASSUMES COMMAND.

The express made few stops. Night came down and the wild section of the mountains where lay Black Gorge was reached. The lights of Valley View were left behind.

At first Pickett had seemed quite changed and improved, but, as they drew nearer and nearer to the gorge, he became nervous and excited once more. He began to mutter to himself and stare out of the window in a fixed manner.

Frank, who had been pleased by the apparent change in the man, now tried to divert his thoughts. The attempt failed, for the engineer paid very little attention to anything Merry said or did.

"It will be a repetition of last night," thought Frank. "If this thing keeps up, Pickett is bound to lose his job. Something should be done."

Something, but what?

"Mr. Pickett," said Merry, "you said you would give me a chance to learn as much as possible about running an engine."

"She was fast asleep when I struck her," said the man, hoarsely. "Poor girl! poor girl!"

"I am speaking to you now, Mr. Pickett," insisted Frank. "I want you to listen to me."

"She never knew—she never knew what killed her!" came from the man's lips. "It was all over in a moment, and I was a murderer. I had her blood on my hands, but I have washed them and washed them."

Then he looked at his hands. All at once he screamed:

"Ah! Blood! here it is! I didn't get it all off! Her blood is on my hands!"

Frank caught him by the shoulder and gave him a shake.

"Stop that!" he cried. "I am talking to you now! I want you to get down and let me take your place. I will run her through the gorge."

"You?"

"Yes. You must let me do it."

"Must!"

"Yes, must! It is for your good, and you must."

"Why, you talk like you thought yourself my master."

"You need a master just now. Think of your wife and children. I may be able to save your job for you—I may be able to save them from want."

"How?"

"Perhaps your 'ghost' will not appear if I am at the throttle, instead of you."

Pickett caught at that idea.

"Perhaps you are right!" he cried. "I had not thought of that. You shall run her through the gorge."

Then he relinquished his place to Merry.

"Now," said Frank, "I want you to keep her hot, just as I would, and I'll send her through without a stop. No spooks will hold up this train to-night."

"All right," said Pickett; "but what if——"

"There are no 'what ifs' in this business. We are going through without losing time here, for all of Mr. Ghost."

"All right," repeated the engineer. "I can't help stopping when I am running her, for it always seems just as it did when I ran over the girl. I feel as if it were actually happening again."

Into the mouth of Black Gorge thundered the express, with Merry running her. He worked up her speed steadily till they were literally flying over the rails.

"If the ghost shows itself to-night, it will have to be mighty quick," thought Frank.

"We're getting nearer—nearer!" cried Pickett, wildly.

"Don't let that bother you," said Merry, calmly. "Just you look after your end of this job for the present, Mr. Pickett. Think of your family."

"Yes, yes; but we'll be there in a moment!"

"The sooner the quicker," came lightly from Frank. "If the spook is on the track to-night, it will have to do some quick dodging to get out of the way."

"You won't stop her?"

"Not on your life! She is going through Black Gorge without a stop if she keeps on the rails."

"Here we are!" burst from the engineer. "Look out for—— There she is!"

Before them was the white figure, fairly in the centre of the track. They came upon it suddenly, and it seemed to disappear beneath the flying engine.

At the same instant, heard above the roar of the train, there was a wild scream, as of mortal anguish.

That sound sent the blood back to Merriwell's heart, and it seemed to make a maniac of Pickett.

"Stop! stop!" shrieked the engineer,

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and he attempted to bring the train to a stand.

Frank grappled with him, crying:

"I said we'd go through the gorge without a stop, and by the eternal skies, we will! You shall not stop her to-night!"

Then he hurled Pickett backward on the fireman's seat and held him there, while the train flew onward.

In vain Pickett struggled. Frank was a young athlete, and he held the man helpless, talking to him calmly.

"It's no use, and so you may as well be quiet, Mr. Pickett. We can't stop for fake spooks every night. It will ruin our reputation and injure the road. It is for your good that we do not stop, as nothing would be found. Besides that it is too late now. Just be quiet and sensible, sir."

After a time, he quieted the engineer, who muttered:

"Let me up. I'm all right now. Let me run her."

After exacting one or two promises from him, Frank let the man resume his position on the right hand side of the cab. When a number of miles had been passed, Pickett turned to Merry and said: "I thank you, young man. You were right, and I am glad you did not let me stop."

"I knew you would be when it was all over," said Merry, quietly. "The conductor has to report all these stops, but there will be none to report to-night."

"But you heard that cry?"

"Yes."

"What did it mean?"

"Don't know. It didn't mean stop, so far as I was concerned."

At the next station Frank got down from the engine and went forward. Something led him to do so. He looked the engine over, and on a bolt of the pilot he saw something that interested him. In a moment he had it in his hand.

It was a small strip of white cloth!

CHAPTER XII.

THE GHOST IS LAID.

"Mr. Newman," said Frank Merriwell, as he stood in the office of the master mechanic, "I wish you would put another fireman on 13 for one trip, and give me a day off."

"Ha!" exclaimed Orrin Newman with a sneer. "I knew it! I knew what would happen! So you have lost your nerve, the same as the others! I knew it would come!"

Frank flushed.

"I beg your pardon, sir," he said, quietly; "I have not lost my nerve at all."

"Then why do you want to get away, hey? Now don't tell me any fairy stories; tell me the truth."

"I never tell anything else, sir," came with dignity from Merry's lips. "I have reason to believe that I can lay the ghost of Black Gorge, and I want to try it."

Newman was astounded.

"What do you mean, young man—what do you mean?" he cried.

"Just what I have said, sir. I think I can capture this spook that is making so much trouble, and I have asked you to put somebody in my place for one trip, in order that I may have a chance to try it."

The master mechanic rose to his feet.

"If you can lay that ghost," he said, "you will do a great favor to the company. But why do you think you can do the trick?"

"I can't explain just why, but I believe I have positive proof that the ghost is a fake. Somebody is monkeying with the railroad."

"How will you go about this work of capturing the spook?"

"I shall take the accommodation over the Black River Branch, which will leave me in Valley View this afternoon. From there I shall walk to the place in Black Gorge, where the spook appears, and I shall conceal myself there. When Mr. Spook shows up, if he does, I shall attempt to bag him."

"Go ahead, young man," cried Newman. "If you can do the trick, it will be a great card for you. I believe you are

likely to succeed. I will send another man out with Pickett to-night."

Thus it was settled, and Frank hastened away to get some sleep before it was time to take the Black River Accommodation.

That afternoon the accommodation dropped him in Valley View.

As he stepped down from the train, Merry saw a wild-eyed young man who was standing and staring at the engine, now and then muttering and shaking his fist at it. His strange behavior caused Frank to pause and watch him for some moments, after which he walked near enough to catch a few words the young man was saying.

"Curse you!" muttered the wild-eyed stranger. "You're another one of them! You are a murderer! Oh, curse you!"

Frank stopped a small boy, and pointing out the man, asked who he was and what ailed him.

"Why," said the boy, "that's Jimmy Ryan, what lost his girl two weeks ago, and he's clean off his nut."

"Is he the young man whose girl was killed in Black Gorge?"

"Sure. He was goin' to hitch to her before this, and she was a mighty nice girl, too. It's rough on Jimmy."

It is," agreed Frank. "I am sorry for the poor fellow. Is he ever violent?"

Nope, not yit, though dad says he may become so. He's all the time hangin' round the railroad and muttering at the engines. Next thing he may do something."

"I should think they would keep a good watch on him."

"Guess it's pretty hard to do that sometimes. He's wanderin' round at all hours of the day and night. Nobody's ever seen him sleep since the girl was killed."

Frank was moved with sympathy for the young man.

He set out to get something to eat, as he knew he would need it, and he found that for which he was looking.

When Merry left Valley View, he struck out across the fields till he came to the railroad, along which he hurried toward Black Gorge.

It was nearly dark when he reached that portion of the gorge where the

"ghost" had appeared. The black sides of the gorge frowned down on him, and it was lonely and dismal there.

He walked along the track till he came to a culvert, where a stream of water flowed from one side of the track to the other.

Right there he stopped.

"Here is where the ghost makes its appearance every night," he said.

Then Frank got down into the culvert and examined the ground. What he found there caused him to nod his satisfaction and say:

"Mr. Spook is composed of flesh and blood, that's sure, for he leaves his tracks, although he has cunningly tried to cover them. He lays in this culvert and does his work every night."

Having arrived at this conclusion, he sought a hiding-place near at hand, where he could watch the culvert without being seen himself. After a little he found the place behind a boulder, and, as it was swiftly becoming dark, he lay down there and waited.

"Come on, Mr. Spook," he said. "We'll have a nice warm time of it before the evening is over."

He did not have to wait long. In the dusky gloom that filled the gorge he saw some person coming down the track from the direction of Valley View. He could hear footsteps on the ties.

"Here comes the ghost!" thought Frank, exultantly.

The person came down the track to the culvert and stopped there. Frank could see that it was a man and that he carried a bundle.

Crouching beside the track, the man undid the bundle. The watching youth saw him take something white out of it and then set to work. Frank tried to make out what the man was doing, but was unable to do so.

After some little time, during which it became darker and darker, the man crept into the culvert beneath the tracks. A moment later, something white came up from between the sleepers.

"There's the ghost for a fact!" muttered Merry, with satisfaction.

Then he rose and walked down to the railroad, stepping softly. In a short time

he was close to the culvert, and he could see a white dummy figure that seemed to stand up there between the rails.

The fact that Pickett had been frightened by such a wretched imitation of a ghost was rather amusing, but Frank was wondering what sort of a game the originator of the ghost trick could be playing.

"Here!" he cried, sharply, stepping to one end of the culvert; "come out of that."

There was a moment of silence, and then a scrambling sound. The man in the culvert did come out, and he flew at Frank, uttering a snarl of fury.

Merry barely had time to prepare for the assault when the man clutched him. Then a fearful struggle began. The stranger had wonderful strength, and he gnashed his teeth with fury, although not speaking a word.

Frank tried to break the man's hold and get in a blow, but he found that was something he could not do.

Becoming more and more enraged, Merry's assailant tried to fasten his teeth in Frank's throat. It was with the greatest difficulty that he was kept from doing so.

At last Frank tripped his antagonist, throwing him heavily. It chanced that the man's head struck on the iron rail, and he was stunned.

When the Evening Express came tearing through Black Gorge, a person stood in the very centre of the track and waved a lighted torch till the train stopped. That person was Frank Merriwell, who cheerfully called:

"Hello, Mr. Pickett! I've got the ghost, and I want you to take him on board."

The conductor came running forward. "What's the matter now?" he snapped, angrily.

"How do you do, Mr. Ballister," said Frank. "Would you mind taking the ghost onto the train? I have it here."

"The ghost!" gasped the conductor. "Where?"

"Well tied up here beside the track."

On the ground was stretched a motionless figure. The conductor flashed the light of the lantern into the face of the man, whose hands and feet were tied.

"Why," he exclaimed, "it's Jim Ryan, whose girl was killed here!"

"That's it, exactly," said Frank. "He's daffy, but he's been playing ghost by hoisting a dummy from the culvert and yanking it down just as the train was right onto it. When he is taken care of, there will be no further trouble with the ghost."

"Well, you have done a good job tonight, Mr. Merriwell!" exclaimed the conductor. "We've had trouble enough here."

"Yes, a good job," agreed Nort Pickett. "It was a fortunate day when you were placed on old 13."

Then the captive was taken on board the train, Frank directing the train hands, and soon the express went on its way.

The ghost would be seen in Black Gorge no more.

[THE END.]

The next number of the Tip Top Weekly will contain "Frank Merriwell's First Run; or, The Chance of His Life," by the author of "Frank Merriwell."

TIP TOP WEEKLY

"AN IDEAL PUBLICATION FOR THE AMERICAN YOUTH"

NEW YORK, JULY 30, 1898.

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Owing to the fact that some of our publications are printed considerably in advance of issue, it was impossible to begin our badge and button premium offer in all on a simultaneous date. Our readers are notified that all copies of the Tip Top Weekly, Starry Flag, True Blue, Diamond Dick, Jr., Nick Carter Weekly and Klondike Kit, dated June 25, 1898, or later, are available under this offer (see page 32), and should you have copy of any of these dated June 25 or later, and WHICH CONTAINS NO COUPON ON PAGE 32, cut out the heading and date from the front cover, and it will be accepted by us in lieu of a coupon under the conditions of the offer. Headings will not be accepted as coupons where the coupon is published on page 32 of the same number.

Little Boy—Phew! it's awful hot for just spring.

Little Girl—You ought to be thankful it's no worse. S'pose we lived in Iceland; wouldn't that be awful?

"Iceland. Why?"

"You better study your g'ography lessons. The g'ography says Iceland is famous for its hot springs."

Would-be Customer—Will you trust me with a few things for a couple of days?

Grocer—Come round in a couple of days and I will.

"But I shall have the money then."

"That is when I would trust you!"

"Well, Willie, did you master your lesson today?"

"No; I missed it."

SPLENDID ADVENTURES IN "TRUE BLUE."

Correspondence.

Jacky, St. Louis, Mo.—Slavery exists in Egypt, Africa, Mozambique, Turkey, Algeria, Morocco and Zanzibar. It was entirely abolished in Brazil in May, 1888, prior to which there had been for several years a gradual emancipation.

Yale, Cleveland, Ohio.—1. Bruce Browning was the character that received the most votes in the character contest. 2. Yes, Mr. Standish went to Colby University. 3. A new girl will shortly be introduced. 4. Possibly the characters mentioned may appear again. 5. Merriwell's father is supposed to be living at the present time.

R. S., Reading, Pa.—Castor oil is the best thing to apply to your boots to make them soft. You must, however, not expect them to shine at once, after being so treated. In a little time, and after two or three applications of blacking, they ought to polish well. Use blacking that is new, and not that which has once been permitted to cake and get hard.

P. H., Columbus, Ohio.—The Hollanders use for the preservation of their sluices and floodgates, drawbridges and other huge beams of timber exposed to the sun and constant changes of the atmosphere, a mixture of pitch and tar, upon which they strew small pieces of shell, broken finely—almost to a powder—and mixed with sea-sand and the scales of iron, small and sifted, which incrusts and preserves it effectually.

S. K., Los Angeles, Cal.—An imitation of mahogany can be made by planing the surface of the yellow pine smooth, and rubbing with a solution of nitrous acid. Then apply with a soft brush one ounce of dragon's blood dissolved in about a pint of alcohol, and with one-third of an ounce of carbonate of soda, mixed and filtered. When the brilliancy of the polish diminishes, it may be restored by the use of a little cold-drawn linseed oil.

M. G. C., Savannah, Ga.—The exiles who live in the mines of Siberia are convicts of the worst type, and political offenders of the best. Recently, even ladies connected with the Nihilist conspiracies have been consigned to the mines. Women are employed as sifters, and get no better treatment than the men. Prince Lubonsirski, who was authorized to visit one of the mines, has given an appalling account of what he saw. Convicts never see the light of day, but work and sleep all the year round in the depths of the earth, extracting silver or quick silver, under the eyes of masters who have orders not to spare them. Men racked with the joint pains which quicksilver produces; others whose hair and eyebrows had dropped off and who were gaunt as skeletons, were kept to hard labor under the lash. They have only two holidays a year, Christmas and Easter; all the other days, Sundays included, they must toil until exhausted nature robs them of the use of their limbs, when they are hauled up to die in the infirmary. Five years in the quicksilver pits are enough to turn a man of thirty into an apparent sexagenarian, but some have been known to struggle on for ten years.

CAPTURING TIGERS ALIVE.

Some curious and thrilling details of his former occupation were recently narrated by a gentleman employed to capture wild beasts alive for a well-known menagerie provider.

After finding the stream to which the tiger must go for water each night on awakening from his all-day sleep (he said) we set about making our preparations. In the direct path of the tiger we dug a pit seven feet wide, ten feet long and fifteen feet deep, but much longer and wider at the bottom than at the top.

All the dirt dug was carefully removed to a considerable distance by the natives. A lot of bamboo strips were next laid over the pit, covered with dry leaves and made to appear like the general surroundings.

We next took three bamboo sticks about twelve feet in length, and placed them in the form of a tripod, in such a position as to bring the point of the tripod directly above the centre of the pit. From the top some of the natives suspended a goat by a cord which was barely strong enough to bear its weight, and sure to break if the tiger leaped upon the goat.

Everything being in readiness, my companion and I, as well as the natives, repaired to a hut a short distance off and awaited developments. I was beginning to think that we were going to be disappointed, when one of the natives rushed into the hut, crying:

"A torch!"

The furious cries of the tiger had startled him as with a terrific roar it sprang upon the suspended goat, and sank with its burden into the pit prepared for it. Lighting a number of torches, both to see the way and to forestall any attack that might possibly be made upon us from other wild animals, we proceeded in a body to the pit. The roars of the tiger were terrible, as he furiously tried to leap upward to gain his freedom.

This frantic behavior was kept up for about an hour, when, entirely exhausted, he lay perfectly quiet at the bottom of the pit. Two of the natives now lowered a bamboo basket, letting the open side fall directly over the tiger. Immediately after this a number of natives jumped into the pit, and began pushing rattan withes through the sand beneath the tiger and bringing them round the basket. In this manner the tiger was in a few minutes completely enclosed.

Returning to the hut, we awaited the dawn, and as soon as it appeared the natives went back to the pit, and I lifted the basket containing the tiger out of it. We detailed ten of them to take our captive to the city.

Before they started I took a look at our prize through the rattans. He was a magnificent specimen, but the sorriest-looking tiger that I ever saw, being covered with blood from his frantic efforts to get out of the pit, and the eyes were almost entirely closed by the swollen face.

WHY!

Not long ago an old pioneer, who had lived in Australia in the days of the early colonists, was boasting of the good old times.

"Why, sir, I was once offered a league of land for a pair of old boots."

"Didn't you take it?" said the party addressed.

"No, sir, I didn't."

"Poor land, I reckon?"

"Why, bless your heart, sir, it was the best piece of land outdoors. Grass five feet high, a clear stream of water running through it and an undeveloped gold mine in one corner."

"And why on earth didn't you make the exchange?"

"Because," said the old man in a regretful tone of voice—"because I didn't have the boots."

APOLOGIZED.

A good story is told of a doctor who was out late one night, when he was approached by a footpad.

"Gimme your money," said the marauder.

The doctor turned round toward the man, and in an offended tone, exclaimed:

"What are you doing over here? Get on the other side of the street; I'm working this side myself."

The tramp begged the doctor's pardon for the breach of etiquette, and vanished.

EVERYTHING READY.

Old Friend—Well, how is your flying machine getting on?

Inventor—Getting along? I finished that twenty years ago. Every detail is complete. There it stands, ready to fly.

"Why don't you show it to the world?"

"I can't. All men are such idiots."

"What's the matter?"

"I can't find a man anywhere with sense enough to climb up a steeple to try it."

"Our cat has just had chickens," remarked Mr. Toadhole.

"Nonsense, Mr. T." snorted his spouse; "you must be inebriated. I suppose you mean our cat has had kittens."

"No, I don't," meekly murmured the poor fellow. "I brought home a couple of chickens for tomorrow's dinner, but Sarah tells me that the cat has eaten them."

Little Bessie had been in to see her new baby brother for the first time.

"Do you think you will like him, Bessie?" asked her father.

"Why, yes," she said, clapping her hands, delightedly. "There isn't any sawdust about him at all, is there! He's a real meat baby!"

GIVE YOUR GIRL AN AMERICAN FLAG HAT PIN—SEE PAGE 32.

Humorous Items.

Tommy—Oh, father, mother said she was a donkey.

Father—I am glad to hear she told the truth for once, my boy.

Tommy—Yes, she said she was a donkey to have married you.

Youthful Applicant—Is this where they wants a boy?

Manager—It is; but he must be a boy who never utters an untruth and does not use slang or swear.

“Well, my brother’s a deaf mute. I’ll send him.”

Reporter—Can I see Mr. B.?

Servant—He’s out, sir.

Reporter—One of the family, then?

Servant—All out, sir.

Reporter—Well, wasn’t there a fire here last night?

Servant—Yes; but that’s out, too.

A lady lion-tamer, young and fair, beckoned to the big lion, and it came and took a piece of sugar out of her mouth.

“Why, I could do that trick,” exclaimed a spectator.

“What! you?” retorted the fair performer.

“Certainly—just as well as the lion!”

The old man sighed as he took the golden-haired, laughing little boy upon his knee, and, stroking his shining tresses, said:

“Ah, how much I should like to feel like a child again!”

Little Johnny ceased his laughter, and looking up in his grandfather’s face, remarked:

“Then why don’t you get mamma to spank you?”

“Spell wrong,” said the teacher.

“R-o-n-g,” spelled the boy.

“Wrong,” said the teacher, “spell is again.”

“A-g-a-i-n,” spelled the boy.

“Look here,” said the teacher, severely, “what do you mean by spelling wrong again?”

“You told me to spell it again,” whimpered the boy.

And the teacher was so mixed up she had to dismiss the class.

“I hate to bother you, pop; but, really, I’d like to know——”

“Well, what?”

“How it happens that baby fish don’t get drowned before they’ve learned to swim.”

“Thank ye, sir,” said the departing Pat to his recent employer, “for the good recommendation, and if you write another one fer yersilf, that yeh ave behaved yersilf like a gintleman while I was with ye, I’ll put me name to it, I will.”

Butcher—I need a boy about your size, and will give you eight shillings a week.

Applicant—Will I have a chance to rise?

“Yes; I want you to be here at four o’clock every morning.”

Aunt—I want to do something to please you on your birthday, Charlie, but I first want to ask your master how you behave in school.

Charlie—If you really wish to please me, auntie, I would much rather you didn’t ask him.

Old Lady: Didn’t I tell you never to come here again?

Up-to-Date Tramp: I hope you will pardon me, madam, but it is the fault of my secretary; he has neglected to strike your name from my calling list.

First Little Girl (whispering)—See that man? He’s a philanthropist.

Second Little Girl—What’s that?

First Little Girl—I don’t know, but I heard mamma say that’s what he is. Don’t let him see us! Mebby he eats folks.

Small Boy—I want take gas.

Dentist—It is not usual to administer gas for a milk tooth, my boy. It won’t hurt but for an instant.

“You’ve gotter gimme gas, or I won’t have it out.”

“You shouldn’t be so afraid of being hurt. Now, sit up here, like a little man.”

“I ain’t afraid of bein’ hurt. ‘Tain’t that. I’m afraid I can’t help giving a screech when it comes out.”

“That won’t matter.”

“Yes, it will. All the boys what I’ve ever licked is waitin’ under th’ winder t’ hear me holler.”

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